



## Dalmatian Mr Darcy goes round the cones in traditional style

*Maggie and Ron Gallop took their champion Dalmatians to compete in the Attelage de Tradition for the first time. The dogs' behaviour was exemplary and they were much admired by the crowds at the show.*

The BDS Area 24's second Concours d'Attelage de Tradition at Helmingham Hall was brilliantly organised by Area Commissioner Eunice Binder.

Sunday's event was held jointly with the Suffolk Punch Trust and the Suffolk Smallholders Society Show. Ten traditional turnouts joined in a weekend of carriage driving that was great fun with an element of competition and a taste of French hospitality. Our contribution to tradition was, of course, the working carriage dog.

After a standing presentation judging by Jane Brightwell on Saturday afternoon, we set off with our Dalmatians Mr Darcy and Miss Mollie on an eight-mile drive around quiet lanes (above right) and sleepy Suffolk villages. At Framsdon we were greeted by more crowds who turned out to welcome us and we were served with refreshments from the local pub, the Dobermann. On Saturday evening, the Stable Courtyard and Carriagehouse Restaurant provided a fine setting for a reception, dinner and entertainment.

On Sunday morning, ring guard Justin Cowles in full regalia added to the pageantry, the horn being blown to announce the competitors as they tackled the 15-gate cones course and six driving skills tests. While this was my first ever cones course and one-handed circle, Mr Darcy excelled himself. His performance (and ours) can be seen on Youtube\*.

The afternoon saw individual parades in the main ring with commentaries on each turnout from Angela Sixsmith: a chance to promote the British Carriage Dog Society. The event president, Lady Tollemache, presented the trophy and rosettes. This was followed by the opportunity for turnouts to trot up the long, straight drive to the magnificent hall with crowds waiting at the top to applaud!

Mr Darcy and Miss Mollie were very proud to receive the Judge's Special Award. **MG**

\*[www.youtube.co.uk](http://www.youtube.co.uk), search for "Helmingham Dalmatian".

Clockwise from top left: Mr Darcy does cones; driving on the Suffolk lanes; Anna Mann checks her skill at reversing; Trish Lebus, skills winner.

